

ZONE D-3

2025 General Deer Hunting Information

(Includes Additional Hunts G-7, G-12, J-8, J-9, and J-16)

GENERAL INFORMATION

This information sheet has been prepared to assist deer hunters applying for, or planning to hunt in, Zone D-3 located in portions of Butte, Colusa, Glenn, Nevada, Placer, Plumas, Sierra, Sutter, and Yuba counties. The following information should be useful to hunters for archery and general seasons as well as any “additional hunts” within this geographic area. For more specific information or additional questions regarding this area, contact the following California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) office(s):

- **North Central Region Office (Region 2), 1701 Nimbus Road, Rancho Cordova, CA 95670 (916-358-2900)** encompassing Alpine, Amador, Butte, Calaveras, Colusa, El Dorado, Glenn, Lake, Nevada, Placer, Plumas, northeastern Sacramento, eastern San Joaquin, Sierra, Sutter, northern Yolo, and Yuba counties.

REGULATIONS

Laws and regulations are designed to conserve wildlife and to provide for an equitable distribution of game mammals. All hunters should read and be familiar with the [Current Hunting Regulations](#). Remember, if you are hunting on private property you must obtain,

and have in your possession, written permission to hunt on private property. Hunter trespass laws are strictly enforced.

NON-LEAD RESTRICTIONS

As of July 1, 2019, all hunters must use nonlead ammunition when taking any wildlife in California, except when hunting with a pellet rifle for approved species.

- CCR T14 250.1(d)(3) Effective July 1, 2019, it shall be unlawful to use, or possess with any firearm capable of firing, any projectile(s) not certified as nonlead when taking any wildlife for any purpose in this state.
- CCR T14 475(f) The take or attempted take of any nongame bird or nongame mammal with a firearm shall be in accordance with the use of nonlead projectiles and ammunition pursuant to Section 250.1 of these regulations.

For more information including a list of certified non-lead projectiles/ammunition that may be used in firearms for the taking of deer or other big game mammals, and links to other related topics, visit [CDFW's Nonlead Ammunition in California web page](#).

DEER HARVEST REPORTING

USED AND UNUSED TAGS MUST BE REPORTED

Accurate harvest information is a crucial element in developing population estimates, tag quotas, assessment of current hunt programs, and in the development of new opportunities. Regulations require all deer hunters to submit a harvest report card (online or by mail) to CDFW. Any deer hunter who does not submit a harvest report for each deer tag issued will be required to pay a non-reporting fee upon application for the next hunt season.

Successful hunters are reminded to immediately fill out both portions of the tag and permanently mark the date of kill; record the appropriate "Unit Number" where the deer

was killed; attach the tag to the antlers, or ear, if antlerless; have the tag validated and countersigned; and return the completed report card portion.

WHEN TO REPORT

Successful deer hunters must report the take of a deer within 30 days of harvest or by January 31 – whichever date is first. Unsuccessful deer hunters (including hunters that received a tag but did not hunt) must report that they were unsuccessful or did not hunt by January 31.

HOW TO SUBMIT A REPORT

- Online – Both successful and unsuccessful hunters are encouraged to submit their harvest reports online. Hunters will be able to report their hunt results online via [CDFW's Online License Service](#). Hunters logging into the system will be able to view all of their tags requiring reports. Reporting through the Online License Service is easy, fast, and convenient. When you report online, you receive instant confirmation that your harvest report card has been received and accepted. You must record the confirmation number in the space provided on the harvest report card and retain the harvest report card until March 1 of that year. Tags reported online must be surrendered to CDFW upon demand.
- By Mail – Any deer tag holder who does not submit a harvest report for their deer tag online, must return the report card portion to CDFW to the following address:
CDFW – Wildlife Branch, P.O. Box 944209, Sacramento, CA 94299-0002.

ADDITIONAL DEER HUNTS

There are 5 additional hunt opportunities within Zone D-3: 1) G-7 (Beale Either-Sex Deer Hunt; military only); 2) G-12 (Gray Lodge Shotgun Either-Sex Deer Hunt); 3) J-8 (Daugherty Hill Wildlife Area Apprentice Either-Sex Deer Hunt); 4) J-9 (Little Dry Creek Apprentice Shotgun Either-Sex Deer Hunt); and 5) J-16 (Bucks Mountain/Nevada City

Apprentice Either-Sex Deer Hunt). For general maps detailing the individual hunt area boundaries, visit [CDFW's Deer Hunting web page](#).

OBTAINING DEER TAGS

Beginning in late 2010, CDFW began implementation of the new Automated License Data System (ALDS). Under this computer data system, all licenses, stamps, and tags are applied for, and issued through Internet Point-of-Sale terminals (IPOS) located at various CDFW license offices, over 1,400 license agents statewide or online at [CDFW's Licenses and Permits page](#). Under ALDS, much less paperwork is required to apply for, and receive tags. In addition, licenses, tags, and entry into the Big Game Drawing can all be accomplished with one trip to a license agent. Once your personal information is entered and stored in the database, the database controls and tracks what you have applied for, or been issued, as well as preference points. For more specific information on ALDS, application procedures and zone/hunt information, check out the current Big Game Hunting Digest available online at [CDFW's California Hunting Digest page](#).

For deer tag distribution purposes, zones and hunts are classified based upon the date in which the zone or hunt tag quota is filled in the prior year. The three tag categories include:

- 1) **"Premium"** zone/hunt tags are only issued through the Big Game Drawing using a First-Deer Tag Drawing Application, except that junior hunters may use their Second-Deer Tag Drawing Application to apply for Apprentice (J) Hunts. Hunters will lose all accumulated deer preference points if drawn for their first choice in the Big Game Drawing,
- 2) **"Restricted"** zone/hunt tags are available upon application with a First-Deer Tag, or a Second-Deer Tag after August 1; and
- 3) **"Unrestricted"** zone/hunt tags are available at any time using either a First- or Second-Deer Tag.

For Zone D-3 and associated hunts within the zone, the tag categories are as follows:

- 1) **Premium** Deer Hunts – **G-12, J-8, J-9, and J-16.**
- 2) **Restricted** Deer Hunts – None.
- 3) **Unrestricted** Deer Hunts – **D-3-5, Archery Only (AO).**

Note: Additional Hunt G-7 tags are distributed by the military and are only available to military personnel.

The deer hunting regulations specific to Zone D-3 (archery and general season) and any additional hunts are listed at the end of this sheet. To hunt deer in Zone D-3, hunters must possess a Zone D-3-5 deer tag which is valid in Zone D-3, D-4, or D-5 during the archery or general season using the appropriate method of take. Additionally, Archery Only Tags (AO Tags) are valid during the Zone D-3 archery or general season using archery equipment only.

Typically, tags for additional deer hunts are in high demand and distributed through CDFW's Big Game Drawing held in June. To receive tags for many of these hunts, hunters must plan ahead and apply before the midnight **June 2, 2025 deadline.**

Information regarding application procedures and restrictions, ALDS, zone and hunt seasons, prior year drawing and hunt statistics are contained in the 2025 Big Game Hunting Digest available online at [CDFW's California Hunting Digest page.](#)

HARVEST INFORMATION

Information on deer harvest for this area is available in tables contained on the [Department's Deer Harvest Data page.](#) For the purpose of applying for hunts in a specific area, tables containing harvest success, antler class information, and Big Game Drawing statistics are the most useful in selecting a zone or hunt in which to apply. The harvest tables found on this web page may also contain more recent harvest analyses than information contained in the Big Game Hunting Digest due to the early production deadline dates for the publication.

LAND OWNERSHIP/PUBLIC LAND OPPORTUNITIES

Zone D-3 contains a mixture of both public and private lands; however, most of the public land is in the eastern portion of the zone. Remember you must obtain, and have in your possession, written permission to hunt on private property. Hunter trespass laws are strictly enforced. Public lands within the zone are administered by the Plumas and Tahoe National Forests (USFS). For information regarding these lands contact the following:

USFS Offices:

Plumas National Forest, 159 Lawrence Street, Quincy, CA 95971-6025 (530-283-2050).

Tahoe National Forest, 631 Coyote St., P.O. Box 6003, Nevada City, CA 95959 (530-265-4531).

There are some public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in the western portion of the zone, but access is extremely limited. Hunting is also allowed on Spenceville and Daugherty Hill Wildlife Areas, administered by the Department of Fish and Wildlife. For more information and maps of these areas contact the Sacramento Valley and Central Sierra Region Office, 1701 Nimbus Road, Rancho Cordova, CA 95670 (916-358-2900).

In Zone D-3 and other zones throughout California, additional deer hunting opportunities may exist on private property licensed through the Department's Private Lands Management Program (PLM). For more information on the PLM and to obtain a list of participating ranches, visit [CDFW's PLM web page](#).

MAPS

For general maps detailing individual zone or additional deer hunt boundaries, visit [CDFW's Deer Hunting web page](#).

The most comprehensive maps of the area are the Plumas and Tahoe National Forest maps. USFS maps are available locally at most USFS offices; by contacting the USFS Pacific Southwest Regional Office at: 1323 Club Drive, Vallejo, CA 94592 (707-562-8737); or ordered by phone (406-329-3024), fax (406-329-3030), or mail at USDA Forest Service, National Forest Store, P.O. Box 8268, Missoula, MT 59807; or online at the [National Forest Map Store website](#).

BLM surface management maps may also be useful. These maps can be purchased at local BLM district offices; the BLM at 2800 Cottage Way, Suite W-1623, Sacramento, CA 95825 (916-978-4400); or online at [BLM's California Maps web page](#).

U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) topographic maps are very helpful, especially for topographic features that are not displayed on USFS or BLM maps. USGS maps may be available from many sporting goods, backpacking or engineering stores; by contacting the USGS directly at: Rocky Mountain Mapping Center, Branch of Information Services, Box 25286, Denver, CO 80225 (888-ASK-USGS); or online at the [USGS Store website](#).

ACCESS/MAJOR ROADS

Major highways include Highway 70 on the north, Highway 80 on the south, Highway 20 and Highway 49. Access to the Bullards Bar Reservoir area is via Highway 49 or, from Marysville, via Highway 20 to Marysville Road.

WEATHER CONDITIONS/TRAVEL TIPS

The weather in this zone can be highly variable, so BE PREPARED. The weather is usually quite hot and dry during archery and early general season, but early storms are not uncommon. The chance of significant snowfall increases throughout the season, but heavy rains can make many roads very difficult, if not impossible, to travel. You should be prepared with appropriate clothing and equipment for a variety of weather conditions.

Zone D-3 covers a large geographic area. The terrain can be very steep and rugged,

and vegetation can be extremely dense. As you should do in all remote areas, hunters are urged to bring a shovel, a good spare tire, extra water, etc. Use care with any off-road vehicle and check with the BLM or USFS for rules and regulations regarding vehicle and travel restrictions in the area. Horses can be useful in some portions of D-3. However, remember that it may be necessary to carry supplemental horse feed into the backcountry. Contact the local USFS and BLM office for more information regarding forage conditions for livestock.

CAMPING

There are several USFS campgrounds within the hunt zone and these are shown on USFS maps. Informal camping is allowed on both USFS and BLM lands, but campfire permits are required. Permits may be obtained from any USFS, BLM, or California Department of Forestry (CDF) office. During fire season, special regulations may apply and it is best to contact the local USFS, BLM, or CDF office for the latest information.

Please, DO NOT camp or hunt for prolonged periods near water sources important to wildlife and livestock. Remaining for over 30 minutes and within 200 yards of an artificial water source, including guzzlers or horizontal wells on public lands within California, is a Fish and Game violation (Title 14, Section 730). You can pack water, wildlife can't.

HERD CONDITIONS AND HABITATS

The deer population in Zone D-3 is considered stable to declining, yet considerably below levels seen in the late 1960's and 1970's. As with most deer herds in California and other western states, the long-term population trend has been on a steady decline since the 1960's and 1970's. These long-term declines have been due to land management practices that have precluded fire, resulting in changes toward more mature and less diverse habitats, and reduced quality and quantity of deer habitats. Short-term fluctuations in deer populations are usually attributed to weather events that affect forage production.

The subspecies of deer inhabiting Zone D-3 include both Columbian black-tailed deer and California mule deer. The deer are generally considered migratory; however, resident deer occur at lower elevations. Deer in this area move to higher elevations in late spring and will remain there until the first heavy fall storms force them down below the snow line. This downward movement often occurs during the hunting season, so hunters should be prepared to move to lower areas later in the season after stormy weather.

The vegetation is highly varied throughout Zone D-3 ranging from oak-woodland, mixed and montane chaparral, hardwood, hardwood-conifer, aspen and dense conifer to alpine habitats. Deer populations in this area respond favorably to vegetation disturbances that enhance brush species (wildfire and timber harvesting). Brush stands comprised of buckbrush, deerbrush and bitter cherry are good areas to hunt. Riparian areas (areas along watercourses), recently burned areas, or clear cuts that have re-sprouted with brush are good areas to hunt. Areas where oaks produce acorns may also attract deer. Typically, lower densities of deer are observed in the more densely forested areas or in older, decadent brushlands.

HUNTING TIPS AND WHERE TO LOOK FOR DEER

Successful hunters often spend a considerable amount of time scouting pre-season, locating individual or groups of deer, recently used deer trails, and feeding and bedding areas. You may not see many deer from the roads in this area and, generally, the more successful hunters do more hiking to locate deer. Binoculars and/or spotting scopes can be very helpful for locating and identifying deer at greater distances. In general, attempt to hunt areas that are away from other activities such as concentrations of hunters, vehicles, and/or livestock.

Historically, some of the more popular and productive deer hunting areas in Zone D-3 include:

Butte County: Feather Falls area: This is largely winter range and hunting is best during the latter portion of the season. Specific areas include: Fields Ridge, southeast of Feather Falls; Sunset Hill, Camp 18, and Watkins Ridge.

Brush Creek area: This is largely winter range and hunting is best during the latter portion of the season. Specific areas include: Merrimac and Coyote Gap.

Mooreville Ridge Road/Sly Creek Reservoir: Migratory deer are generally present in mid-October.

Nevada County: Specific areas include: Bowman Lake, Grouse Ridge, and Red Mountain. Migratory deer can still be found at these high elevations early to mid-season.

Plumas County: La Porte area: Access is via the La Porte Road from Marysville. Hunting has been poor for several years, but areas around Little Grass Valley Reservoir, Camel Peak, Stag Point, and Onion Valley have historically been better areas.

Bucks Lake area: Access is via the Quincy-Oroville Highway. Specific areas include the area between Bucks Lake and the Middle Fork of the Feather River, Bear Creek, and Willow Creek.

Eureka Ridge area: Access is from Highway 70 at Sloat and Highway 89 at Graeagle. Specific areas include White Cap and Big Hill.

Sierra County: Haypress Meadows, Jackson Meadows Reservoir: Access is via the Jackson Meadows Highway from Highway 89. Best hunting in this area is early in the season.

Lakes Basin, Sierra Buttes: Access is via the Gold Lake Road from Highways 89 and 49. In good years, hunting success is favorable throughout the season. Late in the season, deer migrate to the west down Pig and Hog Canyons.

Yuba County: Challenge/Peterson Ridge Road/Pike County Peak Lookout area: Migratory deer are generally present in mid-October. Several thousand acres of USFS

and private timber company land east of Oregon Hill Road and west of Bullards Bar Reservoir.

North of Bullards Bar Reservoir: Migratory deer are generally present in mid-October. Several thousand acres of USFS and private timber company land mixed with a few private ranches. Specific areas include:

Strawberry Valley/Slate Creek (south of La Porte Road), Pendola Road, Garden Valley Road, McClain Roads. Access is from Highway 49 near Camptonville.

Bullards Bar Reservoir: Migratory deer are generally present in mid-October. Boats can be launched from ramps located along Marysville Road. Best areas to hunt are the black oak groves along the north arm of the lake.

Spenceville Wildlife Area: Resident deer are present throughout the year. Migratory deer generally do not arrive until late October. Access from Wheatland is via Spenceville Road to Camp Far West Road to Long Ravine Road. Access from Marysville/Grass Valley is via Highway 20 to Smartville Road.

Daugherty Hill Wildlife Area: Resident deer are present throughout the year. Migratory deer generally do not arrive until late October. Access from Marysville/Grass Valley is via Highway 20 to Marysville Road to the parking lot on Dolan Harding Road. Local camping facilities are available at the Collins Lake Recreation Area (530-692-1600).

For additional information about deer hunting in California, see [CDFW's publication "Guide to Hunting Deer in California"](#) under "Related Information".

2025 ZONE AND ADDITIONAL HUNT SPECIFIC REGULATIONS

For more information, see the current [Mammal Hunting Regulations](#).

§360. Deer.

Except as otherwise provided in Title 14, deer may be taken only as follows:

- (a) A, B, C, and D Zone Hunts.
 - (4) Zone D-3-5.
 - (A) Area: Shall include all of zones D-3, D-4, and D-5 (see subsections 360(a)(4)(A)1. through 3.).
 - 1. Zone D-3. In those portions of Butte, Colusa, Glenn, Nevada, Placer, Plumas, Sierra, Sutter and Yuba counties within a line beginning at the junction of Interstate 5 and Highway 162 at Willows; east on Highway 162 to Highway 70 at Oroville; northeast on Highway 70 to Highway 89; south on Highway 89 to the new Gold Lake Road (near Graeagle); south on the new Gold Lake Road to Highway 49 at Bassetts; east on Highway 49 to Yuba Pass; south on the Yuba Pass-Webber Lake Road (main haul road) through Bonta Saddle to the Jackson Meadows Highway (Fiberboard Road); west on the Jackson Meadows Highway for two miles to the White Rock Lake Road; south on the White Rock Lake Road to the new road to White Rock Lake (below Bear Valley); south and east on the new White Rock Lake Road to the Pacific Crest Trail (one mile west of White Rock Lake in section 21, T18N, R14E, M.D.B.M.); south and east on the Pacific Crest Trail to Interstate 80 near the Castle Peak-Boreal Ridge Summit; west on Interstate 80 to Highway 20; west on Highway 20 to the Bear River in Bear Valley; west along the Bear River to Highway 65 near Wheatland; north on Highway 65 to Highway 70; north on Highway 70 to

Highway 20 in Marysville; west on Highway 20 to Interstate 5 at Williams; north on Interstate 5 to the point of beginning.

- (B) Season: The season for zones for D-3 through D-5 shall open on the fourth Saturday in September and extend for 37 consecutive days.
- (C) Bag and Possession Limit: One buck, forked horn (See subsection 351(a)) or better, per tag.
- (D) Number of Tags: 33,000. The Zone D-3-5 tag is valid in zones D-3, D-4, and D-5.
- (c) Additional Hunts.
 - (9) G-12 (Gray Lodge Shotgun Either-Sex Deer Hunt).
 - (A) Area: Those portions of Butte and Sutter counties within the exterior boundaries of the Gray Lodge State Wildlife Area.
 - (B) Season: The season for additional hunt G-12 (Gray Lodge Shotgun Either-Sex Deer Hunt) shall open on the third Saturday in September and extend for nine consecutive days.
 - (C) Bag and Possession Limit: One either-sex deer (see subsection 351(c)) per tag.
 - (D) Number of Tags: 30.
 - (E) Special Conditions: Only shotguns and ammunition as specified in Section 353 may be used.
 - (30) J-8 (Daugherty Hill Wildlife Area Apprentice Either-Sex Deer Hunt).

- (A) Area: That portion of Yuba County within the exterior boundaries of the Daugherty Hill Wildlife Area (as defined in Section 551, Title 14, CCR).
 - (B) Season: The season for additional hunt J-8 (Daugherty Hill Wildlife Area Apprentice Either-Sex Deer Hunt) shall open on the first Saturday in December and extend through December 31.
 - (C) Bag and Possession Limit: One either-sex deer (see subsection 351(c)) per tag.
 - (D) Number of Tags: 15.
 - (E) Special Conditions:
 - 1. Only junior license holders shall apply.
 - 2. Tagholders shall be accompanied by an adult chaperone 18 years of age or older while hunting.
- (31) J-9 (Little Dry Creek Apprentice Shotgun Either-Sex Deer Hunt).
- (A) Area: That portion of Butte County within the exterior boundaries of the Little Dry Creek Unit Upper Butte Basin Wildlife Area (as defined in Section 551, Title 14, CCR).
 - (B) Season: The season for additional hunt J-9 (Little Dry Creek Apprentice Shotgun Either-Sex Deer Hunt) shall open on the third Saturday in September and extend for 9 consecutive days.
 - (C) Bag and Possession Limit: One either-sex deer (see subsection 351(c)), per tag.
 - (D) Number of Tags: 5.
 - (E) Special Conditions:

- 1. Only junior license holders shall apply.
 - 2. Tagholders shall be accompanied by an adult chaperone 18 years of age or older while hunting.
 - 3. Tagholders shall attend an orientation meeting the day before the opening day of the season.
 - 4. Only shotguns and ammunition as specified in Section 353 may be used.
- (38) J-16 (Bucks Mountain-Nevada City Apprentice Either-Sex Deer Hunt).
 - (A) Area: Excluding Butte, Colusa and Glenn Counties, in those portions of Nevada, Placer, Plumas, Sierra, Sutter and Yuba Counties within the area described as zone D-3 (see subsection 360(a)(4)(A)1.).
 - (B) Season: The season for additional hunt J-16 (Bucks Mountain-Nevada City Apprentice Either-Sex Deer Hunt) shall be concurrent with the zone D-3 general season as defined in subsection 360(a)(4)(B).
 - (C) Bag and Possession Limit: One either-sex deer (see subsection 351(c)) per tag.
 - (D) Number of Tags: 75.
 - (E) Special Conditions:
 - 1. Only junior license holders shall apply.
 - 2. Tagholders shall be accompanied by an adult chaperone 18 years of age or older while hunting.

- (44) Conditions for Additional Hunts.
 - (A) When hunting on military reservations or private lands, hunters shall have in their possession a written permit signed by the landowner, which may specify where and when the permittee may hunt.
 - (B) When required, tagholders shall check in and check out of designated check stations.

§361. Archery Deer Hunts.

- (a) Archery Hunting with General Deer Zone Tags.

Deer may be taken during the archery season only with archery equipment specified in Section 354 as follows:

 - (4) D Zones.
 - (A) Zones D-3 through D-5.
 - 1. Area: As described in subsection 360(a)(4)(A)1. through 3.
 - 2. Season: The archery season in Zones D-3, D-4, and D-5 shall open on the third Saturday in August and extend for 23 days.
 - 3. Bag and Possession Limit: One buck, forked horn (see subsection 351(a)) or better per tag.
 - 4. Special Conditions: Hunters that possess a Zone D-3-5 tag may hunt in zones D-3, D-4, and D-5.
- (c) Archery Hunting with Archery Only Tags.

Deer may be taken only with archery equipment specified in Section 354, during the archery seasons and general seasons as follows:

- (1) Number of Archery Only Tags Permitted. A person may obtain an archery only tag using a one-deer tag application and a second archery only tag using a second deer tag application.
- (2) Zones in Which Archery Only Tags are Valid. An archery only tag is valid for hunt G-10, and during the archery season and general season in all zones except C-1 through C-4 and X-1 through X-12.
- (3) Areas: As described in subsections 360(a) and (c).
- (4) Seasons: The archery season and general seasons are provided in subsection 361(a) above and in subsections 360(a) and (c).
- (5) Bag and Possession Limit: All bag and possession limits per zone are the same as those described in subsections 360(a) and (c).
- (d) Hunting Area Limitations. Archers not in possession of an archery only tag may hunt only in the zone, zones, or areas for which they have a general tag or an area-specific archery tag. (Refer to subsection 361(c)(2) for zones in which archery only tags are valid).
- (e) Crossbow Prohibition. Except as provided in subsection 354(j), crossbows may not be used during any archery season or during the general season when using an archery only tag.